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SUBJECT: U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERT DISCUSSES CLIMATE CHANGE WITH KAZAKHSTANI AUDIENCES

¶1. As part of its U.S. speaker program, U.S. Embassy Astana sponsored the July 7-12 visit to Kazakhstan of environmental law expert Dr. John Dernbach in order to familiarize Kazakhstani audiences with the concepts of sustainable economic growth and the importance of energy conservation in mitigating the effects of global climate change. Dr. Dernbach is Professor of Environmental Law at Widener University in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He had a variety of meetings, public lectures, and round tables with Kazakhstani government officials, environmental organizations, journalists, USG program alumni, and members of the general public in four cities: Almaty, Astana, Ust-Kamenogorsk, and Ridder. Dr. Dernbach gave practical recommendations to the Ministry of Environmental Protection on the Kazakhstani Environmental code and on improving energy efficiency.

¶2. During his public lectures at the American Cultural Centers in Almaty and Ust-Kamenogorsk, Dr. Dernbach explained that with the proper policies in place, economic growth and environmental protection can go hand in hand, and that ecological preservation can actually support other development goals. He addressed the negative effects of global climate change on the Eurasian continent in terms of its effects on human health, agriculture, water resources, and economic security. Dr. Dernbach's lectures were covered by both national and regional media, including the Panorama and Megopolis newspapers, KTV, and several internet news sites. Additionally, ecological NGOs in Ridder expressed strong interest in having Dr. Dernbach's forthcoming book on sustainable development translated into Russian.

¶3. In a meeting on July 8 with the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Dr. Dernbach highlighted the concept of sustainable development and the inseparability of economic development and environmental protection. He noted that in the United States, states such as California and Pennsylvania have been at the forefront of efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He also linked Kazakhstan's desire to become one of the fifty most competitive countries in the world to certain benchmarks that developed countries must meet in environmental standards. While Dr. Dernbach applauded Kazakhstan for developing a new environmental code and a program on sustainable development, he noted several omissions from the code and made some specific recommendations. For instance, he suggested several cost-effective measures that Kazakhstan could immediately put in place to promote energy efficiency and reduce air pollution. These include building codes for new construction, thermostats in office buildings and apartments, energy-saving appliances, and emissions standards for automobiles. He also suggested that Kazakhstan begin a program on waste management and recycling. The Ministry of Environmental Protection representatives admitted that Kazakhstan currently has low energy efficiency standards, and appeared open to considering his suggestions.

¶4. Comment: This was a particularly effective speaker program. Dr. Dernbach communicated the main conceptual ideas on sustainable development in a very persuasive manner. The program succeeded in

raising the awareness of diverse audiences in Kazakhstan about the issues of sustainable development and climate change, especially its relevance to Central Asia. This program was a good start in encouraging discussion of environmental policies and attitudes among government officials, NGOs, and youth in Kazakhstan. In September, post will sponsor a follow-on speaker program by bringing to Kazakhstan a U.S. expert on waste management and recycling. End Comment.